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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MUSTAFA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [PBTS](#) [IS](#) [KPAL](#) [KDEM](#)
SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS SITREP
#5: JANUARY 12, 2006: ABU MAZEN URGES INDEPENDENT FATAH
CANDIDATES TO WITHDRAW; ISRAEL GIVES CEC PARAMETERS FOR
EAST JERUSALEM CAMPAIGNING

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) January 11 appealed for independent Fatah candidates running in the district races to withdraw their candidacies. Palestinian contacts suggest that this request will have minimal effect on most of these candidates. The Israeli Police January 9 provided the Central Elections Commission (CEC) a list of approved Israeli procedures for campaign activities in East Jerusalem, some of which are less than what was permitted in 1996 and 2005. Israeli Police on January 11 arrested and fined campaign workers who attempted to put up campaign posters. A flyer was circulated in Tulkarm January 10, reportedly by Fatah supporters, criticizing the candidacy of "Third Way" candidate Salam Fayyad. EU international observers received promises from PA Police in Jenin and Ramallah that their security would be assured despite recent threats from al-Aqsa gunmen in Jenin. End summary.

Abbas Urges Independents
to Withdraw From Race

12. (C) During a January 11 meeting with approximately 50-60 Fatah PLC candidates -- including some Fatah candidates running as independents -- at his Ramallah presidential office, PA President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) urged independent Fatah candidates to withdraw from the district races. Abu Mazen outlined the problems Fatah confronted, including the internal divisions within the movement and the lack of discipline among the cadres. He expressed displeasure with Fatah candidates who, in efforts to buttress support for their candidacy, had criticized the Fatah national list. Abu Mazen stated that delaying the elections was not an option since a resolution to voting in Jerusalem appeared imminent. Abu Mazen concluded that he would reach out to the independent Fatah candidates and seek their withdraw. (Note: Approximately half of the 260 independent candidates running in the 16 district races are from Fatah, including two members from the Fatah Revolutionary Council. ConGen Palestinian contacts suggest that Abu Mazen's entreaties will have minimal effect on the independents who believe they have better chances of winning than the "official" Fatah candidates. End note.)

Israel Gives CEC "Approved"
Campaign Activity for Jerusalem

13. (C) Ammar Dweik, the CEC's Chief Electoral Officer,

provided ConGen January 11 with a list of Israeli parameters for Palestinian campaign activity in East Jerusalem. Dweik said that the list was presented to the CEC's Jerusalem district coordinator by the Israeli Police legal advisor in Jerusalem during a January 9 meeting. The list includes:

-- The display of campaign billboards. Israel has indicated that it would allow up to 20 campaign advertisements in East Jerusalem, including five within the city center, and 15 on the outskirts of the city. Dweik said that up to 40 billboards were allowed under the 1996 arrangements.

-- No advertisements in private shops or businesses. Dweik said that this represented a key derivation from the 1996 arrangements.

-- No candidate meetings in areas other than private homes and only through prior coordination with Israel. No outdoor candidate meetings permitted.

-- Candidates must provide the CEC at least 24 hours notification if they intend to conduct meetings in Jerusalem.

-- No public display in Jerusalem of Palestinian flags and Palestinian symbols, including the CEC's logo.

-- Campaigning to cease 24 hours prior to the opening of polling stations on January 25.

14. (C) Dweik reiterated that the arrangements related only to campaigning in Jerusalem and said that the Israeli Police legal advisor had indicated that there was no final decision yet on Election Day voting inside Jerusalem. In a separate January 11 telecon, Anwar Darkazally, a policy advisor with the PLO Negotiations Support Unit, described the campaign regulations as unacceptable since they put significant limits

on the freedom of assembly for candidates and their supporters in Jerusalem. Darkazally said that 39 candidates participating in the January 25 district elections in Jerusalem were informed of these campaign procedures during a January 11 meeting with CEC officials. He said that the candidates were "furious" with the campaign regulations, since violators would face arrest and stiff fines on campaigns from the Israeli authorities. (Note: Israeli Police January 12 arrested and fined campaign activists attempting to put up posters in East Jerusalem. End note.)

Anti-Fayyad Statement
Circulated in Tulkarm

15. (C) A flyer attacking PLC candidate Salam Fayyad, reportedly from Fatah activists, was circulated in Tulkarm on January 10. The flyer, which labels Fayyad as an American intelligence agent, comes in the wake of mounting frustration among Fatah supporters that Fayyad's independent faction, "Third Way," was pulling votes away from the "official" Fatah national list.

16. (C) The following is an unofficial ConGen translation of the January 10 flyer:

Begin text:

Decent people of Tulkarm: The governorate of martyrs which has sacrificed many wounded and martyrs and has preceded all other decent Fatah members in other areas. This statement we put out to you in order to divulge and expose the truth behind the American/CIA agent, the so-called Salam Fayyad. This rotten filthy agent who covers himself with patriotic cover is trying to buy your votes by dollars, which were given to him by his masters. We appeal to you by the name of martyrs and the agonies of prisoners to ask this filthy agent where he has been before? Why wasn't he in your town? We tell you he has been making dollars and serving the American

Zionist plots. His election is meant to serve himself and not his people who suffer tremendously under occupation. Beware of this malicious scheme of this grubby person Salam Fayyad.

The Free sons of Fatah
The Concerned Over the People's Interest

End text.

PA Police Assure
Observers of Their Security

¶7. (C) During a January 11 telecon with ConGen Poloff, Richard Chambers, the Deputy Chief for the EU Observation Mission, said that he and other EU observers had received assurances from PA Police in Jenin and Ramallah that the police would provide security to EU's long-term observer teams operating in Jenin. The police told the observers that previous threats by Jenin's al-Aqsa commander, Zakaria Zubeidi, had been dealt with.

¶8. (C) In a separate conversation on Election Day security, an international advisor working for the CEC January 11 told ConGen Poloff that voting for the PA Security Forces would commence January 22 for three days. Approximately 58,000 security personnel (one-third of whom are stationed in the West Bank) listed on the CEC's voter registration list would be allowed to cast ballots in the localities where they are registered to vote. The advisor reported that the PA Ministry of Interior had yet to make logistical arrangements with either the CEC or the IDF on the movement of PA security personnel to their respective voting locations. He also commented that PA Minister of Interior Nasser Yusif had shown little urgency in making those arrangements.

Summary of Local
Press Coverage

¶9. (SBU) The Palestinian dailies January 10-11 published front-page reports that PA President Abbas received USG assurances that campaigning and elections will be held in Jerusalem. The dailies quoted Abbas who said that he would not accept the exclusion of Jerusalem from any aspect of the elections. Abbas added that the elections will proceed as

scheduled and urged Palestinians to exercise their democratic rights.

-- The dailies published statements from Israeli Defense Minister Mofaz, who said Israel would permit elections in Jerusalem provided they are based on the same regulations and conditions that governed Palestinian elections in 1996 and ¶2005. Al-Ayyam reported that Palestinians refused Israeli conditions for campaigning in Jerusalem, as laid out by Israeli Minister of Interior, Gideon Ezra, because Hamas and the PFLP would be excluded from participating. Jerusalem PLC candidate Hatem 'Abd al-Qader said, "We are one united body...we refuse Israeli interference."

-- The dailies also published a statement from jailed West Bank Fatah leader and PLC candidate Marwan Barghuti calling for January 25 to be a "democratic and national unity day." Barghuti promised that an elected Fatah-led government would be free of corruption and respect law and order.

-- A Birzeit University poll that will be published on January 14 reportedly shows that Fatah would win 35 percent of the vote, compared to Hamas at 31 percent.

WALLES